

GROUP DYNAMICS

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Course Description and Goals

Contents

Course Description and Goals	1	Sages, scholars, and laypersons have been puzzling over group dynamics—the actions, processes, and changes that occur within groups and between groups—for centuries. Why, do humans so frequently join with others in groups? How do members coordinate their efforts and energies? What factors give rise to a sense of cohesion, esprit de corps, and a marked distrust for those outside the group? And how do groups and their leaders hold sway over members?
Resources	1	
Course Design	2	
Sensitivities	2	
Feedback about Progress	3	
Instructor	3	
Calendar	4	
Disabilities	4	
Policies	4	Their inquiries provide the scientific basis for the field of

group dynamics, which is the scientific discipline devoted to studying groups and group process. This course focuses, in particular, on studies of social psychological processes in groups. We will restrict our analysis to group phenomena that have been investigated empirically; that is, through the collection of data using scientifically acceptable procedures.

Beyond the content this course will provide an opportunity to develop further our scholarly and cognitive skills. Thus, the learning objectives include:

- **Understanding groups:** Knowledge of terms, facts, concepts, perspectives, values, methods, and theories specific to groups
- **General cognitive capacities:** Facility in analyzing and synthesizing information; solving problems; thinking creatively and critically; self-expression (oral and written); information literacy
- **Applications:** Ability to work with others in groups; development of communication and group problem solving skills; conflict regulation
- **Personal development:** Development of self-regulation and self-understanding (particularly in group contexts); growth in human relations

Resources

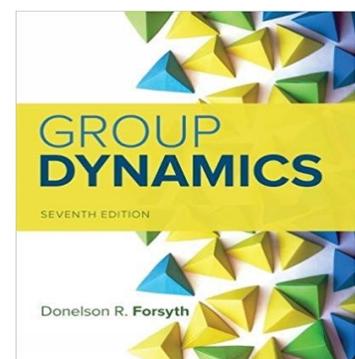
The primary sources of information about groups that we will use in this course are a textbook, specific readings, and online resources.

- **Text.** The text is Forsyth, D. R. (2014). *Group dynamics* (7th ed.). Thompson/Wadsworth.
- **Readings.** Articles and chapters, available via Blackboard, are drawn from various sources, including scientific journals, book chapters, and the popular press. We will study these writings so that you can “listen” to other experts’ voices talk about groups; these sources supplement the distilled, processed ideas that the text book presents.
- **Online materials.** I have developed learning resources to support this course, including online review quizzes, streaming mini-lectures, and PowerPoints for each topic. They are available in Blackboard.

Topics

- ◆ The Study of Groups
- ◆ Research Methods
- ◆ Inclusion and Identity
- ◆ Group Formation
- ◆ Cohesion and Development
- ◆ Structure
- ◆ Influence
- ◆ Social Power and Obedience
- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Performance in Groups
- ◆ Teams
- ◆ Decision making
- ◆ Conflict (in groups)
- ◆ Intergroup Conflict
- ◆ Supplemental Topics

Group dynamics are the interpersonal processes that occur within and between groups; also, the scientific study of those processes. The tendency to join with others in groups is perhaps the single most important characteristic of humans, and the processes that unfold within these groups leave an indelible imprint on their members and on society. To understand people, one must understand groups and their dynamics.



Group Dynamics 2018: Course Design

The course will mix traditional class activities with group activities and online learning activities. Considerable teaching and learning will occur in the classroom, but also online as you take quizzes, complete readings and assignments, and interact in the discussion forum and group areas of Blackboard and Google Docs. During the face-to-face we will carry out group activities, solve group problems, conduct group experiments/experiences, watch videos, and take quizzes/tests, and take part in lectures and discussions.

1. **Self-study.** I have developed extra resources to support this course, including online review quizzes, streaming mini-lectures, and PowerPoints for each topic. Reading and studying the text and making use of these extra resources should be sufficient to learn the basic theories and findings pertaining to groups—but students will need to self-regulate their learning to a degree. I will give short, frequent, timed quizzes via Blackboard to prompt regularity in reading.
2. **Activities.** We will carry out activities that deal with groups. Teachers of group dynamics have for some time recognized the benefits of learning about groups by experiencing group processes and then analyzing the experience. Therefore, we

will break up into groups and afterwards examine our experiences. In many cases I will ask you to write a short paper about the experience to prompt you to reflect on the experience—to consider the group process and not just the content. Also, questionnaires that measure aspects of your personalities will be administered and discussed and you will be asked to study your own behavior and the behaviors you observe.

3. **Online.** This class will use email, Blackboard, and online resources regularly. I rely heavily on email to stay in touch, provide content, and to inform you of deadlines and changes in the schedule.
4. **Group-level outcomes.** You will work in a group on projects and will receive group-level grades. You will have the opportunity to rate the performance of your teammates. Much of your work in groups will occur during class, but group sessions will also take place online or at a time and place of the group's choosing.
5. **Portfolio:** You will be asked to submit, at the end of the semester, an electronic portfolio of your work in this class. Please remember that we are pursuing the same goal: to learn all we can about groups and their dynamics. It will be easi-

er to reach this goal if you can focus sufficient time, energy, and interest on the topic of groups.

Because this course examines group processes, it unabashedly adopts a group-level perspective, stressing group first and individual and organizations second.

Fair warning: This class will not be a good fit for you personally if...

- *you dislike working with others in groups.*
- *you have trouble with self-regulated learning activities (i.e., out-of-class studying), multiple assignments and tasks, and completing work by deadlines.*
- *you dislike spending a part of your week using technology such as Blackboard, online discussions, and email.*

But if you are genuinely interested in people and their groups, then this group is a good match for your inclinations.

Sensitivities

This course examines human behavior, so you may acquire insight into their your personality, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. In general the goals of any particular exercise will be described beforehand except when full disclosure will undermine the educational value of the experience.

Because people differ in their attitudes and values, you have the right to not participate in any activity if you do not wish to. If you are asked to participate in an activity which makes you feel uncomfortable, you should understand that have the right to pass, without penalty

(although a “replacement” activity may be required). Groups should not pressure their members to engage in any behaviors their members wish to avoid.

The course also examines topics where different people adopt widely differing interpretations and outlooks. We will strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions and respect each other's right to express their views. Feel free to debate and criticize ideas, but not individuals.

This class examines group processes and applies that analysis to (a) the groups we observe around us and (b) the groups we will form in class. We need to be able to discuss these groups and their processes openly—and in many cases, critique them—without causing any harm or insult to those who are in the groups.

Therefore, it is best to always be open in our dealings with each other, and to be respectful to the groups we are studying. Ideally, the contents of our discussions should be held in confidence. Things that are said in the class, that are private and personal, should not be shared with others who are not members of the class.

Because we will take part in groups throughout the course, interpersonal complexities are expected—rare is the group that can avoid, altogether, any conflict between the members. Groups should spend time resolving issues that are problematic, but remember you can always rely on your course instructor should you need to discuss class-related matters. Seek me out if something in class or your group is problematic and requires review, analysis, and resolution.



Feedback about Progress

Assignments: Many written assignments (8 to 12) will be given during the semester. Most will involve answering questions concerning a group interaction held in class, but others will require you work with others on a single project or activity. Most will be submitted via Blackboard. Written assignments that are based on classroom activities can't be made-up in the case of absence (but one additional activity will be offered in case you miss a class involving an activity).

Quizzes and Discussions: Each week students will be asked to complete a short quiz or take part in an online discussion about the week's topic on the course's Blackboard site. The online quizzes will be open-book, and the lowest grade will be dropped. We sometimes also complete quizzes during our face-to-face meetings. These group-level quizzes are not droppable, and students' scores on quizzes will be based on their group's overall level of performance.

Exams: We will have 2 examinations. Naturally, items on the tests will cover all course material, no matter what its source (e.g., lecture, text, or video). The final examination will include some cumulative material, but a review sheet will be provided for that material. Exams will be multiple choice. If you are ill on the day of the midterm examination, you must leave me a voice mail message prior to the class. The final examination will be given during the Final examination period. Your scores on the two exams combined are 50% of your grade.

Engagement: Your commitment to learning, as indicated by involvement in class, contributes to your overall grade. A portion of this grade may be based on other group members' ratings of your work and my assessment of your engagement, including both online and in class activity.

Indicators of engagement include:

- Asking questions about course topics (not just about logistics)
- Contributing to class discussions with comments that indicate preparation
- Expressing interest in the course material
- Opening files on the course website regularly
- Proofing written work carefully
- Remaining attentive during class

Indicators of disengagement include:

- Expressing negativity about course methods or content
- Making comments that indicate you did not do the readings
- Leaving class early, arriving late for class, stepping out of the class regularly, not attending class at all
- Using a cell phone or other technology inappropriately

Portfolio: You will be asked, at the semester's end, to submit a portfolio of your work in this class. In addition to your written assignments, gathered in a single file, a summary of your semester's experiences. The details of this assignment are available in Blackboard.

Evaluation

Your grade in the course depends on your successful completion of assigned tasks and overall engagement. A grade of B will be awarded to those who complete assignments skillfully and are fully engaged. Higher or lower grades will be awarded for superlative or lower quality work. In general—but not entirely—grades will be criterion-referenced, individualized, and teacher-generated. First, most of the grading in this class is not normed, but in some cases members' scores will be determined by relative rank. Second, scores will be based on individual and collective work. Third, some portion of your grade will be based on others' evaluations of your work.

This course deals with complex subjects and is challenging and you should budget your time demands accordingly. Cut offs for grades are etched in stone, and based on the following percents.

A+ 99.1-100%	B+ 89.1 to 89.9	C+ 79.1 to 79.9	D+ 69.1 to 69.9
A 91 to 99%	B 81 to 89	C 71 to 79	D 61 to 69
A- 90.0 to 90.9%	B- 80 to 80.9	C- 70 to 70.9	D- 60 to 60.9

If logistical problems arise (or errors in planning must be corrected), then this system may be revised. You will be notified, in class, of any changes. There is no "extra credit" in this class.

Course Instructor, Don Forsyth

I am a member of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies faculty, the UR IRB, the UR Planning and Policy committee, SPUR, the Beckman Foundation Committee, the American Psychological Society, Virginia Historical Society, American Sociological Association, the American Psychological Association (Divisions 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 49), the Society of Personality and Social Psychology, the Association of Personality Psychologists, The Society of Experimental Social Psychologists, Phi Kappa Phi, Golden Key, the River Oaks Civic Association, The UF and FSU Alumni Associations, Facebook, several classes, and the Forsyth (paternal) and Caffery (maternal) families. I am a resident of Midlothian and Montebello Virginia and a U.S. citizen.

I received a BS at Florida State University (sociology and psychology and minor in education) and MS and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Florida in 1978. I have taught at Florida, Virginia Commonwealth University, Kansas, and the University of Richmond. I study leadership, individual differences in moral thought, applications of social psychology in educational and clinical settings, and group dynamics. I hold the Leo K. and Gaylee Thorsness Chair in Ethical Leadership.

Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require I provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams (see <http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/disability-services/policies.html> for more information).

DO use laptops, smart phones, i-pads, and so on only for class-related work, such as reading online documents related to this class, accessing the class Blackboard and/or wiki page, or taking notes.

DO NOT EVER use a laptop or phone for personal matters during class, and that includes during group activities, discussions, presentations, or media clips: Your email and other personal apps should not be open during class. If you are multitasking (e.g., completing work for another class on a laptop during this class), I will ask you to leave class.

IF you are experiencing a personal event that requires you to be online, please let me know before you use the device in class. If you have an academic accommodation that permits the use of a laptop please see me so that arrangements can be made.

Policies

- If you must be absent from class for religious reasons, because you are involved in University-level athletics, or some other good reason, inform me by email of the conflict.
- If you are ill on the day of an examination, leave a voice mail message prior to the class.
- Please heed the basic rules of etiquette pertaining to class, including use of technology.
- *Awarding of Credit:* To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities (see <http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html>).
- *Religious Observance:* Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance. <http://registrar.richmond.edu/planing/religiousobs.html>

Tentative Calendar

This calendar will be revised to reflect changes in emphasis and unexpected events that alter the plan for the course. Check the course Blackboard Page for completely up-to-date information. I recommend you use the Blackboard task tools and calendar tools so you receive automatic notifications.

Date	Topic	Chapter
Jan 16-18	Introduction to Group Dynamics	1
Jan 23-25	Research Methods in the Study of Groups	2
Jan 29, Robert Putnam, Jepson Alumni Center		
Jan 30-Feb 1	Inclusion and Identity	3
Feb 6-8	Group Formation (and diversity, pp. 352-357)	4, 11-2c
Feb 13-15	Group Cohesion and Development	5
Feb 20- 22	Group Structure	6
Feb 27– Mar 6	Social Influence in Groups	7
March 8	Midterm Exam	
Mar 10-18	Spring Break!	
Mar 20-22	Power	8
Mar 27-29	Performance	10
Apr 3-5	Teams	11
Apr 10-12	Decision making	12
Apr 17-19	Conflict	13
Apr 24-26	Intergroup Conflict	14
April 29	Portfolios Due	
Final Examination: May 3 9-12 AM		

- *Honor System:* The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work." <http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/honor/> If you plagiarize, where plagiarism is direct copying of others' work or your own previous work (any sequence of 4 words or more) or use others' ideas without attribution, I will turn you in to the honor council or fail you for the assignment and/or course. Passing on materials from this class to others (e.g., depositing course materials in "test bank" or online at resources sites such as CourseHero) are considered an honors violation. *ALL* work in this class is assumed to be pledged work and individual work unless you are explicitly asked to work collectively.